

I was near the middle line of rails, the train was rushing on. The lady in blue had saved me from a sudden and awful death. Awed and trembling, I reclinced the steps and stood under the lamp with the woman who had saved me, whose face and voice seemed strangely familiar to me.

It must have been the same, with regard to myself, on her part. For, after scanning me closely, she said:

'Pardon me, but is your name Branson?'

'It is. May I ask yours?'

'Certainly. It is Kathleen Wheeler.'

A sudden light illuminated the situation.

'You are Kathie,' said I. 'Kathleen Mavourneen, of Prince's Buildings. Where are Dick and Prue and Stella and father?'

She smiled very pleasantly.

'Oh, they are well and happy at home—over in Rossett. I only came here to visit a sick friend. I have never forgotten your kindness. Soon after you went away from Sherborne an Australian uncle died and left us a small competency. I studied singing—became a ballad singer (under my mother's maiden name, Clare), and so, as the story books say, we all lived happily ever after. Dick went to Green Winson's and asked where Mr. Branson had gone, and Mr. Winson replied, "Gone to Jericho." That was a wide direction, but I never gave up hope. I have always prayed that I might do something to prove my gratitude. My prayers are answered to-night.'

I bent my head in reverence, and said a silent prayer; then I lifted it and said:

'It has indeed been answered. You have been my Christmas Angel.'

I have only a few words more to say. I went over to Rossett, and renewed my acquaintance with the Wheeler family.

And the New Year showed that my scare of Christmas Eve had been a bogus one.

My friend, the director, was a man quick to take alarm, and full of nervous anxiety at some foolish canards, had telegraphed at once to me.

The Swift-Sure did not burst up; and I had not to again face the world with a pencil and a little book.

Still, I must always speak respectfully of Winson's rent book, because it was the means of winning me my Kathleen's love. For, before the coming of another Noeltide, my Christmas Angel was my wife.

We were wedded in the Church of St. Winifreda's, at Sherborne—that church in which Kathie had sought comfort and balm when fresh from the furnace of temptation.

I asked my bride what she would like to give to the Church as a wedding gift; and, after a pause, she smiled her own sweet smile, and said:

'I am a daughter of Erin, on my mother's side. Our Irish—as Father Ephraim calls them—are in great force in Sherborne, and, as usual, they are poor and faithful. Let us give them a Christmas dinner every year, as well as a Christmas box to each City Robin.'

And I said, 'So be it'; and then and there gave a handsome cheque to the silver-haired shepherd of Christ's flock, who blessed us both. And even as I write my Christmas Angel is singing 'Venite Adoremus' to a sunny-haired child named Mary Angela—in memory of Our Lady and my escape.—Exchange.

CHRISTMAS IN MANY LANDS.

CHRISTMAS is celebrated among Catholics the world over as the most glorious festival of the year. How it is kept in Great Britain and Ireland most of our readers know either from actual experience or by hearing of it from their parents. Let us take a glance at some of the countries of the Continent and see how this great feast is observed.

ITALY.

In Rome the principal ceremonies of Christmas are held in the Church of St. Mary Major. It is in this church that the relics of the crib in which our Saviour was laid are preserved; these relics were brought from Bethlehem in the seventh century, under the Pontificate of Pope Theodore I. On Christmas Eve they are taken from their repository and placed on the altar in the sacristy chapel, and there are offered for the veneration of the faithful. The doors are thrown open at half-past four on Christmas morning; after the singing of the matins and lauds a procession marches to the chapel where the sacred relics are exposed, and bears them through the church, where they are placed on the Papal altar. At seven o'clock the first High Mass is celebrated, and after it the relics are held up to view. From early morn to night there is an unending stream of people in the church. From five in the morning to dawn the church is illuminated, and again, later on, in the evening. In the Franciscan Church of Ara Culi the *Sanctissimo Bambino* is venerated by thousands, and there little children, boys and girls of four and five years of age, tell in simple language of the new-born God. The streets are gay with people in picturesque holiday attire, the air, balmy as June, is filled with *confetti* (tiny seed candies), and there is a general appearance of happiness. There is no Santa Claus in Italy, but instead there is Befana, a corruption of Epiphania, supposed to be a very cross old woman. Children are told that she was invited by the Magi to help them in their search for the Christ-Child, but she waited to put her house in order, and when at last she was ready, the Wise Men had gone, and ever since her life has been spent in a vain search for the Infant God. For His sake she cares for little children, and rewards the good, but punishes the bad. There is a somewhat similar legend in Russia, but there the old woman, who is called Babonshka, only rewards the good.

SANTA CLAUS.

Santa Claus, as is generally known, gets his name from St. Nicholas, a dear saint, the patron of children, of virgins, and of sailors. He was an Archbishop, and many stories are told of his care for those in his charge. In Holland, where Santa Claus comes from, the children do not hang up their stockings, but they put their wooden shoes out and leave a window open for him. Sometimes he comes as a bishop, clad in appropriate vestments, and with him comes a colored servant, who carries a rod for naughty children. Occasionally the bishop rides through the streets on a gaily caparisoned steed, while his servant following on foot scatters cakes and candies among the children who troop after.

GERMANY.

In Germany Christmas is essentially a gala day for the children. It is the feast of the divine Child, and for His sake the feast of all children. The German mother thinks nothing a trouble which will add to the pleasure of the home circle. If on ordinary occasions she devotes herself to her family, how much does she exert herself when Christmas comes! Of course, the Christmas tree fills a prominent place in the festivities, and every one is remembered and represented in that tree of love. There is one feature of the Christmas celebration in Germany which deserves special notice. On Christmas Eve two quaintly attired figures make their round among certain houses. They are Knight Rupert and Santa Claus. At the door of the house a bag of fruit, toys, and other good things is handed to Knight Rupert. Then he enters and inquires about the conduct of the children, and if there is a good report from the parents, Santa Claus, who wears a white gown and a gilt belt, orders the contents of the bag to be emptied on the floor, and during the scramble which follows the two figures make their escape.

FRANCE.

In France the Christ-Child Himself brings the gifts for the children. In the villages of Alsatia He goes from house to house ringing a little bell and distributing gifts to the little ones. In Burgundy, the young men and women of the parish meet some weeks before Christmas and practice carols until Christmas Eve. Then there is a supper at which everyone goes in for enjoyment. After supper a circle gathers round the hearth, on which there is an enormous log, call the *suche*, and the children are told: 'See now, if you are good this evening, Noel will rain down sugar plums for you, and at the proper time the little ones find parcels of candies under each end of the log. Carols are sung to Noel (Christmas). Noel! Noel! Noel! is heard on every side. The merrymaking and feasting are prolonged into midnight; then the bells ring out on the frosty air, and the company go in a body to the midnight Mass. After Mass they return home, salute the *suche* log, and resume their feast until morning, when they separate.

SERVIA AND MONTENEGRO.

Among the mountaineers of Servia and Montenegro each family chooses a young man as a guest for the Christmas festivities. He is called the Polaznik or Christmas guest. As he approaches the door of the house he calls out, 'Christ is born,' and throws some corn inside the house. 'Welcome,' calls the housewife who stands ready to meet him. 'Of a truth He is born,' and she throws at the same time a handful of corn in his face. Then he enters the house, and going to the hearth picks up the remains of the largest log, knocks it against the crane so as to make the sparks fly, saying as he does so: 'So may our house-father have all good luck and happiness.' This he repeats, with another good wish, and then places on one end of the log an orange with a small coin on it, which the housewife takes. In return she presents him before he leaves with the leggings and socks worn by the mountaineers, and with a Christmas loaf. The Christmas guest next asks his host what kind of a Christmas he has, to which he answers: 'Christmas has come as a kind guest, my brother; all have enough and all are merry.' Then the kiss of peace is exchanged with the family, the guest takes a seat at the hearth and the day is passed in innocent pleasure and feasting.

Mr. P. LUNDON, Phoenix Chambers, Wanganui, is still busy putting people on the soil. He has also hotels in town and country For Sale and To Lease. Write to him.—*.*

You often hear salesmen of Reapers and Binders say 'Just as good as McCormick' but you never hear a McCormick salesman say 'Just as good.' The reputation and sales of McCormick machines are the greatest in the world.—*.*

A RICH RETURN.

When a mixture attains so wonderful a success in so short a time as Tussicura has managed to do, it is difficult to speak of the matter in a way that does not appear like exaggeration. Let us look back at the career of this extraordinary medicine from the start. It is only a few months since the proprietor launched it upon the market, and, as it was produced in a comparatively obscure town in Central Otago, it will be seen that the inventor was considerably handicapped. There was no idea of putting forth a cheap mixture—for there are only too many of these before the public at the present time—but the object in view was to use the very best drugs procurable after a careful consideration as to the effect they would have on the systems of persons suffering from particular complaints. People are, not unnaturally, chary of trying a new remedy unless it comes to them heralded by all sorts of 'bold advertisements,' and the proprietor of Tussicura, although he might have expected to have an extremely hard fight in convincing the public of the excellence of his preparation, is naturally gratified at its immediate success. At the same time he recognises that, in order to recoup him for his large expense that he has been put to in preparing the mixture, he must seek a wider field, and the number of testimonials he has received amply justified him in anticipating a success.—*.*